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the Key partner

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Air Force recognizes the important link between the success of its mission and the support received by Air Force personnel from their families. This linkage is manifested in retention statistics, morale, and job performance.

Knowledge of the Air Force mission and systems is vital in determining the amount and type of support to be given. We hope that "The Key Partner" will not only assist you as a reference for Air Force knowledge but that you will also enjoy it.

We at the Air Force Family Matters Office applaud your efforts to strengthen the military family unit.

Sincerely,

Dennis P. Tewell

Dennis P. Tewell, Col, USAF
Chief, Air Force Family Matters
Office (AFFAM)
DCS/Manpower and Personnel

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The Air Force Family Matters Office
gratefully acknowledges the fine work of
Gail Pichon
in authoring "The Key Partner."

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
Headquarters US Air Force
Washington DC 20330-5000

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14 June 1985

Personnel

THE KEY PARTNER

This pamphlet is a guide for an important part of our leadership team—the Air Force spouse. It is intended to prepare spouses for experiences they are likely to face as the spouse of a commander. Send suggested changes or additions to HQ USAF/MPXH, Wash DC 20330-5060.

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INTRODUCTION

Have you just found out that your spouse will soon be a unit commander for the first time? This may be a goal you both have actively sought for a number of years. Or, this job may be a goal your spouse has worked toward while you pursued career, educational, or individual interests. While you are, no doubt, thrilled for your spouse, you may be experiencing many doubts, having many questions, and realizing that your spouse's new job is going to affect your life and the lives of your family members dramatically.

Although you will not be molding men and women, be saluted as you perform inspections, or be responsible for huge weapons systems, you will have an opportunity to influence the morale and well-being of a large number of military spouses and their families.

The Air Force is actively seeking you and your spouse as a team for this new role because the Air Force recognizes the important contribution the commander's spouse makes to Air Force families and the Air Force mission. You are now about to assume the role of the key partner.

This handbook was written to assist you to prepare for the experiences you may face as your spouse assumes the role of commander. While every effort was made to include a discussion of as many topics and issues as you are likely to face, no handbook will contain every possible experience. Look to your peers — the spouses of other commanders — as additional resources for you, and you for them.

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YOUR NEW ROLE

There are many tools that can help you in this new role as the commander's spouse and partner. Your own attitude and commitment to the task at hand can make a tremendous difference. Knowing that this will be a time-limited role can make it easier to muster whole-hearted enthusiasm and dedication. No one remains in the same command position forever.

Tools: Communication, Knowledge, and Your Personality

Communication is a necessary tool for you as commander's spouse. You will want to keep lines open between you and other unit spouses, your spouse, your family, the unit, base organizations, the Officers' Wives' Club (OWC), and other sources. The communications network that you establish can provide the information and support to make your job much easier. This network can keep you in touch with yourself as well as those around you.

Give yourself the extra tool of knowledge. Do a little research — on the unit, the base and its organization, the OWC, protocol, the community, and other groups and organizations in the area. Knowledge in these areas can lead to a greater sense of assurance and competence.

However, your greatest tool or asset is your own personality. You have talents, interests, and perspectives that are unique to you. When these are shared with warmth and caring, they are truly gifts.

Being in the limelight may also be a new experience; fading into the background will be impossible. For example, one commander's spouse decided on a Tuesday afternoon to have a haircut the next week. That evening the telephone chairperson said, "I hear you're having your hair cut next week." Not everyone would think a haircut would be of interest, but your words, mannerisms, appearance, and activities will be noticed and cause comment for the duration of your spouse's tour as unit commander. The comments and observations are not usually meant to pry or interfere, but rather indicate interest and sometimes a desire to be a part of "what's happening."

Through all of this, your best defense is just to be yourself. Don't be tempted to "wear the commander's rank." Blend in at the commissary, the BX, and the hospital — it can be embarrassing when a young doctor accompanies you to get your records, then on to the labs, and finally to his office just because he recognizes you as the commander's spouse.

Roles: Public Speaker, Advisor, Confidant, and Friend

As part of your new role, you will be asked to wear many hats. You may be called upon to do public speaking several times during the course of this assignment. This may come naturally to you, but if it doesn't, don't let your "turn at the podium" throw you. Many times you will be there to honor the spouse of a retiree or to offer a thought for the day; be sincere and be yourself. You will be speaking to a room full of your friends.

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You may formally participate as an advisor to the OWC, on an installation board, or for a volunteer organization. In any of these cases there will be the weight of responsibility. Wherever possible gather information concerning the organization you are advising, read their by-laws or constitution, know how they solicit volunteers and fill positions, and understand their goals and resources. If, for example, you are advisor to the Thrift Shop, you may want to volunteer at that Thrift Shop. This will give you the opportunity to become personally acquainted with the other Thrift Shop volunteers and to observe firsthand the mechanics of the operation of that particular Thrift Shop.

Your advisor's hat will also be there on an informal, social basis. Officers' spouses, enlisted spouses, and NCO spouses may seek you out on any number of issues. They may ask which VIP's should be invited to a party. They may ask whether they are eligible for CHAMPUS. They may want to know if you feel their spouse's career would be adversely affected if they seek employment.

You may find you are sought as a confidant. Your spouse, particularly, may place a greater trust in your counsel than ever before. Part of your role as key partner may be to act as a sounding board as your spouse ponders problems of personnel, personality problems, problems associated with mission completion, pleasing superiors, and working well with peers. Make this a two-way street, you will need someone to trust and confide in also. Many command couples have said that they become closer during this time of command responsibility.

There may also be others who seek you as confidant and trust your discretion. You will symbolize a source of experience and information. Be sure to guard these confidences and protect those who have placed their trust in you.

Many people will want to become your friend, even though there is only one of you. You can be a friend to many the same way you have been a friend in the past — through caring, sincerity, and responsiveness. Offer assistance whenever possible; the newcomer you welcome personally, the new mother you visit, or the sick spouse you visit with food will remember your kindness and friendship.

Organization

You will probably need to wear another hat called "organization." You will become a real "efficiency expert" while managing the responsibilities of home, family, OWC, social life, volunteer work, and unit spouses. Plan ahead in each of these areas. Often you will find that the more you do, the more you *can* do. Your own energies can be self-motivating, but don't let them become self-destructive by spreading yourself too thin.

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A TOUCH OF PROTOCOL

You have always wanted to be an expert on Air Force protocol, right? Well, you won't have earned that label even after reading these pages. After consulting Air Force protocol offices, Air Force manuals, a variety of publications, and a number of former commanders' spouses, it seems that there is no "expert" on Air Force protocol. This is because protocol seems to be a combination of tradition, etiquette, and courtesy and as such, is open to change and growth.

With that thought in mind, the following *guidelines* are offered for your consideration. These guidelines focus on some of the areas concerning protocol most frequently encountered by commanders' spouses.

Change of Command

The change of command will be of immediate concern to prospective commander's spouses. If this is your spouse's first command, the atmosphere of the change of command will be entirely new for you. Usually the incoming commander and spouse are very excited and eager to assume the responsibilities of the new command. Remember in your enthusiasm for the new position, that this is a very nostalgic and emotional occasion for the outgoing commander and spouse. Often the departing command couple have established strong ties with the unit and its families. They may be seeing the change of command as the end of what may have been the most exciting and rewarding part of their lives.

Unit farewell parties and coffees for the departing command couple should not normally be attended by the new command couple. The farewell parties are given in thanks and recognition of the service and friendship given by the departing commander and spouse. Some incoming commanders and their spouses have attended these farewell functions and noted that it is very difficult to stay entirely in the background to give the departing couple their evening. Having the new commander there can divide the attention of the unit members who want to offer an effusive welcome, but also feel a strong loyalty to the departing commander. For these reasons, it is better to decline graciously any invitation to the farewell party, if such an invitation is issued. There are always exceptions to every rule, however, for example, when the second in command is assuming the new command.

At the change of command ceremony, seats will be designated for the families of the incoming and departing commanders. Other VIPs will also have designated seating. The ceremony itself usually is fairly short, and it is generally followed by a reception for the new commander and spouse. The departing command couple may not attend the reception, or, in some cases, they may make a brief appearance for a cake-cutting ceremony and congratulations. This depends upon the unit and its traditions.

Military photographers generally record the event and prints of these pictures will be given to the respective commanders. Special courtesies, such as corsages, may be extended to the commanders' spouses. Arrangements for the ceremony and the reception may be made by the unit and coordinated with the unit spouses.

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Invitations

You will be receiving and issuing many invitations as a commander's spouse. There are some general guidelines that may be helpful. Invitations may be formal or informal. Formal invitations are generally issued for official functions. These invitations may be handwritten, engraved, or partially engraved. They should be on cream or white note cards and are always written in the third person. The only abbreviations generally used for formal invitations are R.S.V.P. and Mr. or Mrs.

If the function is unofficial, the format of the invitation is determined by the hosts; it may be formal or informal. Informal invitations may be issued by telephone or a personal note on any form of stationery you choose — even crossword puzzles or wrapping paper! Invitations are normally extended two weeks in advance and answered as soon as possible. Formal invitations should be answered within 24 hours, on plain white notepaper and handwritten following the format and wording of the invitation.

On formal invitations R.S.V.P. or Regrets may be placed in the lower left-hand corner along with a phone number. The mode of dress for the occasion may be mentioned in the lower right-hand corner. R.S.V.P. is an abbreviation for a French phrase that means "reply if you please." Your response should be made within 24 hours to the appropriate phone number. A regret should also be given within 24 hours. In response to a formal invitation, the regret should be handwritten in the format of the invitation on plain white note cards. (See Appendix A for examples of formal and informal invitations.)

VIP Guests

At unit functions, the command couple is host. Often VIPs may be guests at these unit functions. If several VIPs have been invited and it is impossible for you to greet each one individually and show them to their seats, an escort should be provided to meet each VIP guest. VIPs are usually introduced at the unit functions and you will want to visit with each guest if at all possible. Special courtesies such as corsages may be appropriate, but these are optional and depend upon the resources of the unit.

At one squadron Christmas party, eight VIP couples attended. Each couple was met by a different couple who showed them to their seats and conversed with the guests during the cocktail hour. Two head tables were arranged side by side. The squadron commander and spouse hosted one table, while the operations officer and spouse hosted the other table. This is only one way to approach the matter of VIP guests. The main idea is to welcome each guest and offer every courtesy possible.

Receiving Line

At certain functions, you may be a part of a receiving line or you may go through a receiving line. Persons in a receiving line are stationed single file, and an aide usually makes the introductions. The aide does not shake hands since he is not a member of the receiving line. An example of the order of an Air Force receiving line is as follows: aide, hosts, ranking honored guest and spouse, second ranking

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guest and spouse, etc. If the receiving line is for a social event such as a wedding, women generally proceed through the line first. At official functions the officer will enter the receiving line first in order to give names.

Dining-out

Units may sometimes schedule dining-outs. These are social functions adapted from dining-ins, which include the spouses. A dining-out is a formal event. Military members attending will wear mess dress and spouses will wear formal attire. Rules for the dining-out will vary, but are usually printed in a program at each place setting. A seating chart is generally located in the cocktail area. Place cards will probably also be used.

At the opening of the dining-out and periodically during the evening, toasts will be made. Everyone stands when toasting the President of the United States, heads of state, and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. Appropriate responses to these toasts are often printed in the program for the evening. During subsequent toasts the women often remain seated, but it is helpful to follow the lead of the head table.

When being seated for dinner, any unfinished drinks should be left in the cocktail area. Once the dining-out begins, attendees should remain seated until intermission. Smoking is usually permitted only when "the smoking lamp is lit." These and other "rules" are usually printed in the program. Infractions of the rules can lead to a trip to the "grog bowl," which is an ominous concoction of various liquors and beverages. Many times the rules allow a woman to decline the penalty, which is then assumed by her escort.

All of this is done in the name of good natured fun and camaraderie. At one base, three commanders' spouses were sent to the grog bowl. The three women went together to the non-alcoholic grog bowl and decided to curtsy to the grog bowl, rather than salute. They were loudly applauded and everyone had an excellent evening.

Although, such terms as grog bowl, Mr. Vice, president of the mess, and "the smoking lamp" may seem a little alien at first, they add to the spirit and charm of the evening. The position of Mr. Vice is often filled by the most junior ranking officer. The president of the mess is normally a more senior officer appointed for the evening. A good-natured bantering goes back and forth between Mr. Vice and the president of the mess, and they will probably provide you with a great deal of amusement and laughter before the evening has ended.

Parades

Parades are official functions that you may be asked to attend. Seating is often reserved so you should arrive in time to be seated before the parade begins. Stand when the colors, passing in review, are six paces before you, and remain standing until they are six paces past you. Stand also at the first note of Ruffles and Flourishes, our national anthem, or the national anthem of other countries.

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The Flag

Honor is always afforded to our national flag. The flag is raised ceremoniously each morning at 0800 and lowered in the evening at retreat. Music is usually played during these times also. If you are within sight or sound of the flag as it is being raised or lowered, it is appropriate to stand at attention and place your right hand over your heart. If you are in your car and hear the music accompanying retreat or reveille, you should stop the car until the music has ended.

Resources

A protocol officer is usually assigned at each base and will be able to answer specific questions. Also, materials may be available from the protocol office that will be helpful. The Air Force has publications on dining-ins, flags, military funerals, parades, and many other subject areas. The "Guide to Air Force Protocol AFP 900-1" may be of particular interest to you. Books such as *Air Officer's Guide*, Harrisburg, PA: The Stackpole Company; *The Air Force Wife*, New York: Harper and Brothers; *Etiquette*, Emily Post, New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co.; and *The Once Over . . . Lightly*, Vivian Lee Reynard, Arlington, VA: Lite Lines Publications may be additional resources of interest.

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MILITARY ORGANIZATION, COURTESY, AND EDUCATION

Maybe throughout your years as an Air Force spouse you have acquired substantive knowledge of the structure of the Air Force or, perhaps, you are primarily familiar with the structure of your spouse's unit. Whatever your current level of expertise, you may want to review both the "little picture" and the "big picture" of the Air Force. Situations will occur repeatedly in which your knowledge of the organization will be helpful to you. Therefore, your understanding of how all the pieces fit together and of how all the people fit together can help you in every area of your new role as commander's spouse and partner.

Unit

The composition of the immediate unit is particularly important for you to understand. If your spouse assumes command of a MAC (Military Airlift Command) flying squadron, for example, the unit may have pilots, navigators, engineers, loadmasters, and airmen. These positions may be further divided. For example, pilots may be first pilots, aircraft commanders, instructor pilots, and flight examiners. These positions are very important to the members of the unit and to their families. They represent service, experience, and achievement.

Your spouse is probably the best source of information on the unit. You can learn of the mission of the unit, its structure, or special awards earned by unit members. This information can be mentioned in the unit newsletter or it may just offer you the opportunity to congratulate the unit member and family at your next meeting. Everyone appreciates recognition. Your personal congratulations can indicate an interest and caring that may have far reaching effects.

Your spouse can also give you an indication of the politics occurring within the unit. It may be helpful to know, for example, when two spouses are often in disagreement at unit meetings, that their spouses are competing for the job as executive officer to the commander. This added insight may help you to smooth feelings and frustrations.

Wing

The wing structure at a base is also important to understand. The wing may be either a tenant or a host organization. If the wing is the host organization, the commander's spouse may have designated advisory positions. The command couple will also act as host to all visiting VIPs. A base may be referred to as a SAC (Strategic Air Command) base if the host wing belongs to SAC even though many organizations from other commands and agencies are "tenants" on the base.

A diagram of the units that make up the chain of command within your spouse's organization/command is a useful item to have. A diagram listing the agencies and organizations on the base is also helpful.

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Air Force Structure

Many of us don't think too far beyond the base, but there is a larger structure of the Air Force beyond the front gate. *Air Force Magazine* is an excellent resource to give you a look at the big picture. If you don't subscribe to the magazine, it is available at most base libraries. In the May issue and in the September issue you will find valuable information concerning location of Air Force bases, pay scales, personnel, aircraft, and a breakdown of the major commands, separate operating agencies, and direct reporting units.

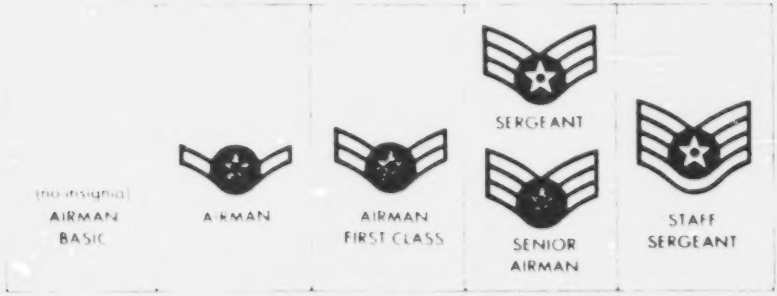
Each year, the May issue of *Air Force Magazine* includes the "Air Force Almanac." You should be able to find your spouse's unit listed and also view a diagram showing where that unit fits in a particular command or agency. For example, for the Military Airlift Command (MAC), the command headquarters is listed with the three supporting Air Force levels identified (21st Air Force, 22nd Air Force, and 23rd Air Force). The diagrams are very helpful and the accompanying articles give an insight into the mission and resources of the command.

Each year, the September issue of *Air Force Magazine* lists a directory of the members of the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, the USAF Air Staff, the Deputy Chiefs of Staff, and commanders of the major commands, separate operating agencies, and direct reporting units. Air Force generals serving in joint and international slots are also listed. You are probably not interested in memorizing these lists, but you may want to refer to this source at some time. One of the VIPs listed may be visiting a base where your spouse is a commander, and you may be involved in hosting or attending a function honoring the VIP. In either case, it is helpful to understand the position occupied by the VIP.

Courtesy and Rank

Everyone likes to be recognized for achievements and status. It is only courtesy to address someone by his/her correct title. Rank structure is very important for the commander's spouse to understand. Most commanders' spouses are familiar with the insignia and structure of the officers' ranks. However, many commanders' spouses may not be as familiar with the insignia for NCO and enlisted personnel. For example, when you walk through the halls and ask for assistance, that individual may be more inclined to help if you know he is *Chief* O'Hara!

Air Force Enlisted Insignia



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Along with your awareness of rank structure, it will be useful to be as current as possible concerning promotions, awards, and job changes. The accomplishments of unit members will often be the cause for congratulations and celebration. These moments bring people closer together and create shared memories. The new "Captain" or the "Airman of the Month" will appreciate your recognition and congratulations.

Military Education

Professional Military Education (PME) is available to military members to help them move up the chain of command. A cursory knowledge of the PME available may be helpful to you, when unit members are discussing the correspondence course they are taking, or when you are asked to attend graduation ceremonies for the NCO Academy, etc.

For junior officers, S.O.S. (Squadron Officer School) is available in residence at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, or by correspondence. For officers in intermediate grades, service schools are available such as Air Command and Staff College (ACS), Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, which may be taken by correspondence or in residence. Senior service schools are available, such as Air War College (AWC), Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, or National War College (NWC) and Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF), Ft. McNair, Washington, D.C. The Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, offers graduate degrees for Air Force officers. A Senior NCO Academy is located at Gunter Air Force Base, Alabama. The Education Office on most bases will be able to answer additional questions concerning educational opportunities available in the military.

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RELATIONSHIPS

Family

It may be that your family has always been very involved with the Air Force, or it may be that the Air Force has pretty much belonged to the active duty member and the family has done its own thing. In either case, the amount of Air Force-oriented involvement associated with the new command may be a new experience for the family. The command assignment can be a very interesting and rewarding experience for the entire family.

The children will probably be excited and curious about the new command. They may enjoy seeing the new office and taking a tour of the unit. This can help them picture where their parent is and what he/she is doing, since long hours may be devoted to the new command.

More demands may be made upon your time and that of your spouse than ever before. Communicate with your children regarding the increased demands so there will be no surprises—"forewarned is forearmed." Reassure the children that there will be quality time for them and then make time for them. Also, you will need time as a family without interruptions to share concerns and feelings and to remain in touch with each other. The support and involvement of the family is always important, but it can be even more crucial with the pressures of a command assignment.

Children can become involved and feel a part of your new interests and responsibilities. They may want to help make nametags for a special function, or visit the unit during an orientation to better understand the mission of the unit, or participate in a party to decorate the unit. There may be a number of family events scheduled during the year for the unit such as picnics and childrens' Valentine or Easter parties. Base-wide programs such as Air Shows and tours can be great for the family, too.

Some units sponsor several sports teams such as baseball, basketball, and volleyball. When the team is playing, often the commander attends the game. This is a good time for the whole family to enjoy an event together. You can make the event special by bringing a picnic supper for the baseball game or stop for a pizza after the volleyball game. In other words, even with added commitments outside the home, many events can be made to include the family.

Peer Command Spouses

It is important to have a good working and social relationship with peer unit commanders' spouses. These spouses may become very good friends. They are excellent sources of information concerning programs, party ideas, suppliers, etc. Command peer spouses are not in competition with each other in spite of the fact that there is always an element of competition between peer units, such as on the sports field or in a bombing competition.

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Staff Spouses

The spouses of staff officers in key positions within the unit may be among your strongest supporters and friends. These spouses may be willing workers for unit activities and are often ready to share your responsibilities to help get information to their individual sections/divisions. Involve these spouses wherever possible in decisionmaking and get their feedback concerning the needs of the unit and other issues. Share information with these spouses so that they will be able to answer questions and act as your emissaries. You will have an effective team if you can take advantage of the available talent and expertise around you. You may want to entertain these staff spouses, perhaps with their mates, to get to know them better and encourage their participation and cooperation.

NCO Spouses

Depending upon the nature and structure of the unit, you may be dealing with a number of NCO and enlisted spouses in conjunction with the new command position. This may be the first time you have worked with many NCO spouses. A quick review of rank structure for NCOs and also the different job positions within the unit may be useful to you.

Many NCO and enlisted spouses work. Many don't want to be involved in a structured spouses' group associated with the unit. Some have spouses who don't want them involved or informed concerning unit affairs for a variety of reasons. Be aware that these conditions and attitudes exist when you begin working with these spouses.

Contact senior NCO spouses for ideas and suggestions. Often these individuals have been associated with the unit for several years, have seen many commanders come and go, and have seen both successes and failures. They can be a valuable resource. Many of these spouses have individual talents or contacts that they are willing to share with the unit. Keep the senior NCO spouses informed whenever possible. Include these spouses in the planning of large unit functions; they have wonderful ideas and usually have a great information network for encouraging participation!

Let support and information be a two-way street with the senior NCO spouses. A unit NCO spouses' group may be in existence or there may be a need for such a group. In either case, be willing to offer your services and experience as advisor or to help organize the group. Be available to attend meetings or functions of the NCO spouses whenever appropriate or possible.

Remember to offer thanks and praise with this group of individuals as you would with all other groups. Your calls, visits, and cards will be appreciated in times of crisis and in cases of congratulations. When you are able, participate in NCO spouse groups, involve them where possible, and inform them of unit and base functions, such as orientations on the unit, Family Support Centers, and benefits for military family members.

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Senior Staff Spouses

You will, of course, be working with senior officers' spouses. Coordinate whenever possible with these spouses. Be sure to put the dates for unit functions on the wing calendar or command calendar as soon as they are scheduled. Avoid unnecessary conflicts in this area wherever possible, so that senior couples will be able to attend unit functions when invited. This coordination will also help avoid conflicts in your own schedule. For example, you may tentatively schedule a large unit function on an evening when a command function will be scheduled for a visiting VIP and you and your spouse will be asked to attend.

Unit Officers' Spouses

You will probably be very involved with the unit officers' spouses. You will be their "link" to the commander. Some of these spouses may try to align you with some of their causes, because they will *assume* you have influence.

You may be advisor for these spouses on anything from protocol, to the organization of the OWC, questions concerning CHAMPUS, and other questions. You may also be a problem-solver for unit families in time of crisis. You will have access to the network of unit spouses necessary to mobilize for food, babysitting, or other aid in times of emergency. You will also be a resource liaison between the unit, the base, and the community. You may sometimes feel like a go-between and messenger. Most important of all to this group will be your friendship. You can offer to share yourself—your time, your energies, and your talents. You can encourage, support, and welcome.

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UNIT FAMILY CRISES

There are many types of family crises, including severe illness, divorce, abuse, and death. Because your spouse, as commander, is responsible for the performance, health, and well-being of unit members and because you will also be friends with many unit families, you may become involved to some extent in some family crises. This is never an easy situation to handle; your best tools will be your own caring and concern.

Emergencies

In the case of severe illness, it may become necessary for you to mobilize unit resources. A unit spouse, for example, may need to have emergency surgery while the active duty member is on TDY out of the country. The unit will, of course, arrange to contact the unit member immediately and fly him/her home as soon as possible. In some instances, the return trip could take two or more days. In the meantime, children may need care, and other family members may need to be notified.

An emergency committee can be set up in advance with volunteers for babysitting, meals, transportation, and other services. Some units prefer to consider everyone to be a member of the emergency committee, and calls go out first to the unit members living closest to the family needing assistance. Some units even have meals prepared in advance and kept in a freezer for emergency situations. There are several approaches to mobilizing for emergency situations; the most important step is to have a plan before the emergency arises. This can be discussed at a unit spouses' meeting, so that the group can decide on a plan of action that is feasible and comfortable.

As the commander's spouse, generally, you will initiate the emergency committee. Be sure to consider the issue of consistency when enacting the emergency committee. You may have to weigh the circumstances of an event to determine whether or not it is really an emergency before involving other unit spouses.

In talking with Air Force spouses, you will hear many stories of groups that have "pitched in" in emergency situations. They have arranged shifts for around-the-clock attendance for children in medical emergencies, arranged carpools for transportation for children of bedridden mothers, and driven unit members to doctor's appointments. In short, the unit is a support network composed of caring people who are willing to help in any emergency.

Divorce

There are many areas of family crises where the commander, spouse, and unit are not able to ease the problem or be directly involved. Divorce is such an instance. In this case, you may be involved as a concerned listener because you are a friend or because the person seeks your counsel. You may want to recommend a number of resources available to help the family, such as family or individual counseling, the chaplain's office, the Family Support Center, or legal counseling. There are agencies both on and off base that are equipped professionally to offer

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assistance to persons in need. Steer these persons to professional sources as soon as possible, and avoid becoming personally entangled in the problem. Be knowledgeable about base and community resources so that you will know which agencies can help.

Abuse

You may also become aware of cases of substance or physical abuse among unit members. In these cases, it is advisable to encourage them to seek professional help. Community resources, the Family Support Center, the chaplain's office, and medical facilities are available to help in these situations. You may want to seek professional advice for yourself in order to understand a particular situation; however, when faced with situations such as these, refer them immediately to a professional.

Death

No one likes planning for situations concerning death, but unfortunately this is necessary. Commanders' spouses who have helped families in times of grief have stressed the value of advance planning and knowledge. In some flying units, for example, a crash has resulted in several deaths and several families had to be notified and helped. This is an event that affects the entire unit. Here are some guidelines that may help you through this trying time.

Notification will be the first priority. The notification is usually made by the commander (or his representative), the commander's spouse, a chaplain, and a medical officer. In the event of multiple deaths, teams can be formed so that all of the families are notified at approximately the same time. The Air Force will notify the parents if requested to do so through the Personal Affairs office. Usually a service member from the nearest military installation will be dispatched to make the notification. Notifications should be made before any press releases are made public.

Visitations by the commander and spouse are appropriate. Your own instincts concerning time and location are best; you may want to wait until other family members have arrived. Your main contribution during these visits is your concern for the family, their welfare, and their peace of mind. The family will probably have several questions; you may want to tell the family of the Personal Affairs office, the Mortuary Affairs officer, the Summary Court officer, and the Accident Board. You can let the family know that they will be visited by an officer from the Accident Board as a matter of course. The questions he/she will ask are routine in nature and are not meant to intimidate the family.

In the case of an accident such as an aircraft crash, everyone needs to be informed. Fear and misinformation can be very counter-productive. The commander can brief the spouses on the accident and answer their questions. The unit needs to function as a team during this time. The Public Affairs office on the base, and not individual unit spouses, should answer all questions from the press. Unit

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spouses should be advised that they may be contacted by the press, but that all inquiries should be referred to the Public Affairs office.

During these difficult times, the unit can be of assistance in a number of ways. Babysitting and food for the families may be needed. Transportation for arriving family members will be required. Unit spouses may offer to stay with the surviving family members or to record messages and gifts for later thank-you notes. This is the time that organization and mobilization of assistance are needed.

A Summary Court officer is often selected from the unit to be a liaison between the family, the unit, and the Personal Affairs office. This officer is often a friend of the family, but should know how to research Air Force regulations and how to find information needed by the surviving family from the base. This officer will act as escort for the surviving family and attend to all duties concerning the military. The Personal Affairs office will also be available to assist the family in applying for insurance benefits.

Generally, a Base Mortuary officer will contact the surviving family and make an appointment to discuss benefits for which they are entitled and funeral options. A memorial service or funeral may follow.

Emergency Preparation

After a tragedy has affected a unit, many unit members see the need to attend base orientations concerning survivor benefits and other related information. Stress the value of these orientations before tragedy strikes. Many units have also found that emergency notification cards are helpful. One squadron used the following format for these cards:

- Name, address, phone numbers
- Children's names and ages
    - Schools attended
    - Who has permission to pick them up
- Spouse's employer and phone number
- Parents' name, address, home and work phone numbers
- Notify in case of accident _____
- Religious preference

Tragedies such as aircraft accidents remind us that the Air Force is composed of professionals. This is not an "8 to 5" job with fringe benefits. In fact, the Air Force is not a job at all; the Air Force is a profession with a commitment of life itself for the preservation of our country and way of life. This idea is often difficult for families to realize in peacetime situations. For this reason, it is important for family members to be aware of their benefits and to attend orientations and films concerning POWs/MIAs, or other military concerns. Preparation cannot alleviate the pain in times of tragedy, but it can be a source of strength to know what must be done.

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COMMITTEES AND COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

A smoothly running committee system can be beneficial to you and to the unit. The committee system allows for greater participation on the part of unit spouses, which can help lead to a sense of belonging, fellowship, and greater involvement by all. The committee system can also help ease the burdens of administration from your shoulders.

Often, committee chairpersons are in place when your spouse assumes command. If this is the case, you can get a good feel for unit morale and the level of participation by contacting these committee leaders. A coffee or lunch, perhaps in your home, is one way to become acquainted. At that time you can acquire information concerning the functioning of each committee and problem areas.

You may prefer to telephone each committee chairperson to introduce yourself and become acquainted with the job description of each position. As you work with these spouses throughout the year, you will learn which of the functions that they perform are key to achieving your unit goals. For instance, you may find that the personality of the telephone chairperson is a key for good morale. For example, information concerning an upcoming unit function is being sent through the telephone committee, and your telephone chairperson is enthusiastic; that attitude may be passed to others. Sometimes you may need to cancel a scheduled unit function; this may require reassembling the telephone committee that month. The attitude of your chairperson can make a difference in how this information is sent and received.

As the year progresses and it becomes time to recruit new committee leaders, you will know which positions are particularly vital to the unit. Committee positions may be filled through volunteers, or you may prefer to ask individuals to accept a position for which you feel they are especially well-suited. In either case, the person responding will want a complete job description and a definite time period of obligation. No one wants to commit to any position for life! Often these positions are filled at the end of spring, before vacations, moves, and summer schedules interfere. This allows new committee leaders time to organize their thoughts and records, since unit activities and meetings generally slow down or stop for the summer.

The following are some of the possible committees and positions that can help the group function smoothly:

- Coffee Committee
- Invitations Committee
- Program Committee
- Publicity Committee
- Roster Committee
- Social Committee
- Sunshine Committee
- Telephone Committee
- Welcoming Committee
- BX/Commissary Representative
- Historian
- OWC Representative
- Treasurer

The need for many of these positions and committees depends upon the size of

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your unit and its composition. You may want to perform some of these tasks yourself or combine some of the functions. Everyone likes to feel that he/she is a contributing member of the group, however, and there is always a job suited for everyone. With many participating, there is less work for each individual—including yourself! Learn to share the workload and experience by delegating and dividing work wherever possible. Develop a team to pursue common interests and goals.

Should you decide to solicit volunteers to fill committee positions, at your unit meeting you may want to distribute a sign-up sheet with the job descriptions attached. This will give everyone a chance to understand what is being accomplished by the group. (Appendix B is an example of a sign-up sheet used by one squadron.)

Unit Coffees

Most Air Force unit spouses refer to their regularly scheduled meetings as "coffees." These coffees may be held at any time of the day or evening with any type of program or refreshments. The coffees are usually held in the homes of unit group members, but the group may also decide to go to a restaurant or on a special outing.

Hosts will be needed for each monthly coffee. Hosts can usually be scheduled by passing a sign-up sheet at one of the first unit coffees. It is advisable to have coffee hosts scheduled for several months in advance. A team made up of a host, who provides the home or other location, and two helpers can work well depending upon the size of the unit. The coffee chairperson is responsible for putting together the sign-up sheet and should remind the hosts one month in advance that they signed up for the following month.

Nametags are very helpful at the coffees; newcomers may even have special ribbons attached to their nametags so that everyone will be sure to notice and greet them. Nametags are normally provided by the host. The coffee chairperson should remind the host that nametags will be required. You may want to keep a supply of plain white nametags on hand to bring to the coffees just in case they are omitted.

The commander's spouse normally conducts the business meeting at monthly coffees. A typical agenda for these meetings might look like this:

- Thank you to the host.
- Welcome and introduction of guests.
- Welcome newcomers and ask them to introduce themselves. A welcome gift, such as a unit pin, may be presented at this time.
- Farewells (gift optional).
- Family announcements—babies, promotions, transfers, illness, etc.
- Reports/comments from committee chairpersons.
- Upcoming events and other news.
- Sign-up sheets for host and other volunteers. Special thanks to volunteers who have donated time and services.
- Program.

At times it may be necessary to have the program begin immediately after the welcome and thank you to the hosts in order to accommodate the schedule of the

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speaker. The business meeting can take place at the end of the program.

As the commander's spouse you may choose to act as host for one or more coffees. There may be a "tradition" of the commander's spouse hosting a particular coffee at some time of the year, such as Christmas or a salad luncheon in the spring. Most of these "traditions" haven't really been around long, so you may choose to make a new "tradition." Select a time of year and a mode of entertaining that suit your personality and your schedule. This will help the event be more successful because you can enjoy entertaining at a time and in a manner suitable to you.

Invitation Committee

Invitations are sent to senior spouses and guests for some unit functions. The invitation chairperson writes the invitation on unit stationery, and often a map is drawn and enclosed for convenience. The invitation should be mailed in a timely manner to arrive two weeks prior to the function. The invitation chairperson should have a current list of senior staff spouses with addresses and complete, and correctly spelled, names. Stamp and stationery expenses are reimbursed from unit spouses' funds.

Program Committee

If the unit spouses meet regularly they may have a program at the meeting. The program chairperson arranges for programs for the year. The chairperson should always give the speaker complete directions to the function or arrange for transportation and notify the host of the type of program, in case special lighting or arrangements will be required. The program chairperson should give all pertinent information concerning the program to the publicity chaireperson and to the commander's spouse. Include these details in the calling information and/or the unit newsletter. The commander's spouse also needs the mailing address and full name of the speaker or program participants in order to write a thank-you note after the program.

Having interesting and timely programs can make a difference in the participation level. With today's hectic pace people often want more from time spent than social interaction. Input from the unit spouses is helpful to determine which programs would be best attended. The previous commander's spouse may have left a notebook with program suggestions and may include a list of programs that were not well attended.

Since you, as a commander's spouse, may be a guest at functions scheduled by other units, you may be exposed to a variety of good programs. These ideas should be passed along to the program chairperson for consideration.

Look to the local community; often an officer from the police force is available to speak on topics such as home security or self-defense. Programs can range from résumé writing to coping skills to fashion. Round table discussions can be fun and motivating. Anything is possible for a group of creative and dynamic Air Force spouses. You are only limited by your own imagination.

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Publicity Committee

The publicity chairperson in many units writes an article each month for the local OWC magazine about the unit's activities for the month: newcomers and departees are often mentioned, new parents can be congratulated, unit triumphs hailed, and future programs can be advertised to lure a bigger turnout for the next function.

Roster Committee

You will find that having an up-to-date unit roster will be of tremendous benefit. Because so many of our families arrive and depart during the summer months, late August is a good time to assemble a new roster. A volunteer from the unit group members can obtain the names and addresses of current unit spouses from the executive officer. (This information is released only with the permission of the personnel involved.)

The roster should be ready to hand out at the first unit spouses' function in September. The front sheet may include the names, positions, and phone numbers of the committee chairpersons, the commander's spouse, and the deputy commander's spouse. The roster may also include the regularly scheduled meeting time (e.g., third Wednesday of the month). The names and addresses of senior staff spouses may be included along with all other unit members.

The roster is very helpful to all the members of the unit. Rosters are useful to arrange carpools, to locate friends, to send thank-you notes, to find other unit families in your area, and many other purposes. The unit roster should be presented to senior staff and other unit commander's spouses. Also, an update sheet should be provided periodically to keep the roster current. The names of newcomers and departees can be printed in the unit newsletter and mentioned at regular meetings. You will probably find that your roster resembles a checkerboard, as you make additions and deletions. Your roster will be considered the ultimate source of information so its currency is especially important.

Social Committee

You may find it helpful to have a social chairperson who can plan the unit parties for the year. The social chairperson may have a standing committee or may ask for volunteeers to help with specific functions.

Sunshine Committee

The Sunshine chairperson sends cards welcoming new babies, consoling grieving families, cheering the ill, and expressing other appropriate sentiments to families in the unit. The source of this information is generally you, the commander's spouse. You can keep informed via your spouse, the 1st Sergeant, or word of mouth. The news network you develop is very important. Your spouse's secretary and the executive officer are other sources to consider.

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Telephone Committee

The telephone chairperson has an important position. It is this person's responsibility to establish a working telephone network. Generally, most unit spouses are willing to participate as callers. This gives them the opportunity to keep up with the latest unit news and also allows contact with other unit group members. Most callers are responsible for telephoning no more than five or six other unit spouses. This calling procedure is not too time consuming and learning the schedule of the spouses to be called helps conserve time. For example, if some spouses work during the day, evening may be the best time to reach them.

When contacting newcomers, you may want to get them to agree to become a caller. This is an excellent way to ease newcomers into the unit spouses' group and give them a sense of belonging.

Occasionally, you may receive a complaint that someone in the organization was not informed about a function or did not receive a call. This may be because a caller doesn't take the job very seriously, or it may be that the person being called is hard to reach. The lines of communication are crucial to good morale, and it helps to stress to all the callers that their efforts are very important. For example, the newcomer will want to be added to the calling list immediately and will look forward to the first call about upcoming events.

Obtain a telephone calling diagram from the telephone chairperson that lists all the callers and the entire network. This can prove invaluable to you when the chairperson is away unexpectedly and it is time to initiate the news network. The diagram is also helpful to have if you receive complaints from several spouses on a caller's list about not being called; you may want to speak to that caller and determine if the caller might prefer another position. Most people like to change their responsibilities periodically. Remember that newcomers are an excellent source for new recruits!

Welcome Committee

Welcoming is something Air Force spouses have done well for years. Being welcomed makes the transition for the incoming families much more pleasant and does wonders for morale. Quite often, personnel entering the unit have an interview with the commander; this can be an excellent source of information about the incoming family. This initial interview generally includes information on the names of family members, permanent and/or temporary address, and phone number. The new family may be staying in the TLQ or at a nearby motel, and most families appreciate being contacted during this time to welcome them and inform them of any unit functions. The welcome chairperson may want to contact the newcomer while still in temporary quarters and make arrangements to meet.

Some commanders' spouses like to meet each newcomer in person; some prefer to telephone the newcomer and then meet at the next function. This depends upon the size of the organization and time constraints. A welcoming committee can be established to help with this duty.

If the unit is large and families live in several geographic locations around the base, you may want to have several spouses designated as welcomers. They will

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usually schedule a convenient time to meet the newcomer and take a welcome packet. The packet may include the unit roster, the latest OWC magazine, the latest unit newsletter, a welcoming letter from the commander, and any other appropriate material. The most important thing is that the newcomer be welcomed personally and be introduced to the unit through the eyes of a new "friend."

To acquaint the newcomer with the unit, names of other families who live in the immediate area may be circled on the unit roster. One of these neighbors may want to bring the newcomer to the next function or the commander's spouse or welcomer may offer to bring the newcomer.

BX/Commissary Board Representative

The unit may be requested to supply a person to serve on the BX/Commissary board. This is a very informative position and may appeal to a number of the spouses. Generally, these boards meet monthly or quarterly. The spouse serving on the board from the unit becomes a liaison between commissary and BX management and the unit group. The unit's representative can give a brief report on the board meetings at the monthly unit meetings. The other group members can ask questions at this time and provide input for the next board meeting. This is an opportunity for the group to see problems solved and provide input into base services that affect their families.

Historian

The historian may be a fun addition to the unit. This volunteer would record social events and major happenings of the unit via news clippings, pictures, and anecdotes. These can be placed on a bulletin board at the unit office or be added to a scrapbook. Scrapbooks and pictures make great going-away gifts too!

Officers' Wives' Club (OWC) Representative

At some bases, various units have a volunteer participate as an OWC representative. This often involves participating as a greeter for the OWC and its activities. The representative may also help to assemble the packets containing OWC materials that are presented to each new OWC member. This position is often combined with that of unit welcomer.

Treasurer

The treasurer keeps unit funds and presents financial reports to the unit spouses' group at the regularly scheduled meetings. Funds are replenished throughout the year by donations and fundraisers. The treasurer's reports can be used to plan ahead to keep the treasury at a comfortable level to meet unforeseen demands. Make every effort to leave an ample amount in the treasury when handing over the reins to a new commander's spouse. Immediately initiating a fundraiser as the new commander's spouse can be very awkward.

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THE OFFICERS' WIVES' CLUB

Most military spouses have heard of the Officers' Wives' Club (OWC) even if they have never participated in this club. An OWC is active on nearly every major U.S. Air Force installation. As a new commander's spouse your knowledge of the local OWC will be very important, since you may be asked to participate as an advisor on the OWC board or serve as an advisor to the Thrift Shop, Family Services, or other club activity. Your unit may be asked to sponsor one or more functions during the year for the OWC. Unit spouses may ask you questions concerning an OWC event, protocol, or board positions. In all of these instances, knowledge of the OWC will be essential.

Unit Spouse Participation

The OWC is an extension of the network that exists among the unit spouses. The club offers an opportunity to participate with other military spouses, meet new friends, and broaden our horizons in social, service, and intellectual arenas. The OWC also affords the opportunity to acquire new skills. These are only some of the reasons to encourage unit spouses to participate in the local OWC.

Some spouses feel that because they work they cannot participate in the OWC. This is not the case. Often, functions for the members and/or couples are held in the evenings. Usually the OWC provides a monthly magazine with information concerning not only OWC events, but also base news, unit news, tips for shopping, points of interest in the local area, and other topics. The inside cover of the magazine usually lists names and phone numbers of all board members and others who can be valuable contacts. The magazine can be an enjoyable way to stay informed and to feel a part of the group even if a working spouse is unable to attend all OWC events. Encourage the unit spouses to take advantage of this supportive network. The cost is minimal and the rewards are many.

Your Participation

If you are asked to act as an advisor to the OWC, you may want to review the constitution and by-laws of that OWC. A quick review of parliamentary procedure may also be helpful. Copies of *Robert's Rules of Order* and *Simplified Parliamentary Procedure* are available in most libraries and bookstores. Your role as advisor is to counsel based upon your knowledge and experience. The direction and workings of the OWC can be accomplished by the elected and appointed board members.

Another way to become acquainted with the functions of the OWC is to read the job descriptions of the various board members. This will give you a better understanding of the concerns and issues discussed during board meetings. You can't be an expert in each area, but with more information you can be more comfortable as an advisor.

Your own participation in OWC events will set an example. You can be a prime motivator by offering encouragement and enthusiasm wherever possible. You may also find yourself in the position of peacemaker. Again, you cannot be all

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things to all people. You can only be yourself and offer as much support as possible.

Some commanders' spouses like to sit on the OWC board even if it is not in an advisory capacity. Often these spouses like to know firsthand what is transpiring at board meetings, etc. This depends upon your own interests and the time you have available. Many times, commanders' spouses will be sent copies of the OWC board meeting minutes every month. This is another way to stay current on OWC activities.

OWC

The OWC receives funds from membership dues and fundraiseres held during the year. Funds obtained from fundraisers (Ways and Means) are spent for welfare projects such as Air Force Village, Boy Scouts, base teen club, local charities, and scholarships. The OWC actively serves the military and civilian communities.

Each OWC has its own constitution and board. As a private organization, the OWC falls under the jurisdiction of the base commander and military regulations. The base legal office can answer any questions concerning legality of the constitution or the allocation of funds, for example. Local laws concerning issues such as raffles and sales may also be pertinent.

As the unit commander's spouse you may be asked, "What are the direct benefits of the OWC to a unit spouse?" Unit spouses may complain of a "coffee club" environment or boring programs. The OWC can be anything the members want it to be. The way to get programs and events of particular interest is to *participate* and make their organization what they want it to be!

The OWC offers a variety of sports opportunities such as tennis and bowling groups. It often arranges interesting tours and theater groups. Mah Jongg, bridge, book clubs, and gourmet groups meet under the umbrella of the OWC. In short, the OWC can and will sponsor almost any type of interest group for military spouses from computer orientation seminars, to resume skills workshops, to dance lessons.

In order to foster unit morale, you may want to arrange for a unit table at OWC functions. This gives the unit members one more opportunity to compare notes with others in the same circumstances and to become better acquainted. Being together also makes the day a lot more fun! Be sure to keep a watch for any new unit spouses as they arrive at their first OWC function. It can be an ominous and lonely proposition to arrive at an event with hundreds of people and not know anyone. A table set up for your unit will seem like a haven of warmth in such a huge gathering. You may even want to contact any newcomers ahead of time to arrange to meet them at the OWC event or offer a ride.

Unit Sponsored OWC Events

The unit spouses may be asked to sponsor an OWC function during the year. This usually means that you will be the honorary chairperson for the event and you will need to appoint a working chairperson and committee for the function. Be sure to plan for this function well in advance so that there will be plenty of participation and little pressure. This is a chance for the unit spouses to work together on a pro-

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ject for themselves and other OWC members. The plans for the event can be as elaborate or as simple as the planning committee decides upon. A seasonal theme such as "Christmas in July" or "Fall back into Spring" or "St. Patrick's Day" might be fun.

The unit spouses will normally be responsible for selecting the menu for the OWC event they are sponsoring. They will also select table linens, decorations, and theme. Unit spouses may act as hosts by greeting at the door and pouring punch when appropriate. As the honorary chairperson, you may be asked to offer a blessing or thought for the day. If you are unsure of a thought for the day, you may want to do a little research at a library. Many books of poetry and verse are available that may fit with the theme and mood of the occasion.

In the planning stages for the event, you may act as advisor to those who will be working with the catering manager at the Officers' Club. You may want to coordinate with the OWC publicity, social, program committees. The working chairperson can attend to all of these coordinating activities. Delegate wherever it is helpful to you!

Your encouragement and support throughout the planning stages will help to make the event successful. Here is another opportunity for you to be "chief volunteer." You may want to offer your home for planning meetings—this doesn't mean you need to have elaborate food and drinks. Keep it simple—maybe iced tea and cookies or coffee and doughnuts. Your presence and enthusiasm can be the main ingredients for a successful meeting.

On the day of the big event, you may want to help with decorating and other details you may also be called upon to "run interference" for the members of the unit. An example of this happened in one unit when a young wife was pouring punch. She noticed that the punch bowl was badly cracked and had a waiter remove the bowl. The club waiters decided not to bring additional punch and bowl for the remaining 15 minutes of the social hour. The young wife was distressed and approached the commander's spouse for assistance. The commander's spouse quickly located the club management and arranged to have a filled punch bowl in place for the remainder of the social hour. In this case, the commander's spouse was calling upon experience and knowledge of the management system of the club. You will find many instances when you are "problem-solver" and mentor rolled into one.

OWC events can be publicized via the calling network and the unit newsletter. Events can also be mentioned at unit coffees. Often, the unit group members may opt to carpool to such events or offer transportation to newly arrived unit members.

Selecting OWC Candidates

When it becomes time to select a slate of candidates for the new OWC board, you may be called upon to make recommendations from the unit. Give careful thought to the experience and background of the spouses being considered before recommending them for a high pressure position. Be sure to contact the members you would like to nominate for their consent. Be able to describe in detail the responsibilities of the positions for which you are recommending them. Don't pres-

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sure anyone into accepting a commitment they are unprepared to assume.

Some commanders' spouses feel they have a quota to fill or that they want the unit to be well represented on the OWC board. You can certainly point out the advantages to participating on the OWC board. It is a wonderful learning experience for many group spouses. Any spouse of a career service member should be encouraged to become involved because this experience will be invaluable when asked someday to be advisor to an OWC board. Don't, however, feel you have a quota to fill. Be ready to accept a polite "no" with understanding.

The OWC will be a valuable support network for you as commander's spouse, also. You will meet commanders' spouses from other units and other commands as well. These individuals may become some of your best friends. It is always comforting to be able to exchange thoughts and ideas with people "in the same boat." You will also gain valuable information about what is happening on the base and in the civilian community by conversing with these spouses. Make the OWC a valuable resource for yourself and the unit group members during your tenure as commander's spouse.

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VOLUNTEERS

If you are the hub of the unit spouses' group, the other members are the spokes and the structure of the wheel that turns to make the unit and its activities function. At every turn, you are dealing with "volunteers" who somehow make everything come together. They put on great parties, make fundraisers a reality, donate large chunks of time to organizations on base and in the community that directly benefit military families, and often go unheralded for their herculean feats. This is really an elite group and as a commander's spouse, you have just become a leader for the volunteer efforts of the group and at the same time the chief volunteer!

Nothing in the unit can be accomplished without the help of volunteers. They make the committee organizations work, they make newcomers feel welcome, and they are the core of the spirit and morale of the unit.

Participation

As the commander's spouse, you will constantly be seeking volunteers. Your own personality and attitudes toward volunteering will affect the response of the unit group members. In order to be a motivating force, it is necessary to be as informed as possible about the benefits of volunteering. Some of these benefits include learning new skills, increasing a network of friends, serving the community, and attaining a sense of growth and personal satisfaction.

Most of the individuals you contact will be willing workers and anxious to be involved in some way with the military community. Many have outside commitments, such as jobs, school, small children, and community volunteer activities. Keep this in mind when seeking volunteers. The individual being contacted is in the best position to evaluate commitments and interests, so be ready to accept a "no" graciously when someone must decline. Your attitude of understanding and encouragement can foster a positive response the next time you seek help.

With the hectic schedules of today, avoid "burnout" whenever possible. Too often, the same core of volunteers are asked over and over to complete a new project or "pitch in." These individuals' energies and enthusiasms can fade quickly when they are overtaxed. By seeking new volunteers and finding some means of participation for everyone in the group, the tasks can be more enjoyable and accomplished more readily.

Most volunteers want a complete description of the position in which they are becoming involved. Whey you approach a potential volunteer, go armed with as much knowledge concerning the position as possible. Be able to answer any questions concerning the task at hand and know the benefits and resources that accompany the position. For example, a volunteer slot at the Thrift Shop may have child care provided, refreshments donated, good company included, and first choice at wonderful buys. Other benefits could include valuable experience in bookkeeping, cashiering, inventory, and other skills.

Volunteers are usually more willing to commit their time for a specified length of time. They may accept a position for six months or a year. They may prefer to share the position with a friend to allow greater flexibility. There is a volunteer job

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for everyone, and a job that meets the needs, abilities, and time constraints of each volunteer.

The working spouse may offer to host an evening coffee, decide to make arrangements for a unit party, or help with a weekend function. The spouse at home with small children may enjoy doing telephoning when the children are asleep, offer to type the unit roster, or decide to become a Family Services, Red Cross, or Thrift Shop volunteer to "get out." The important thing is to have as many of the unit spouses involved as possible.

A "thank you" goes a long way towards encouraging participation. The thank you can take many forms. Personal thank-you notes from the commander's spouse are always appropriate. Public thanks at unit coffees and parties are very worthwhile. Newsletters and bulletin board notices may be other ways to offer public thanks for support and a job well-done. Try to encourage thank yous from as many sources as are appropriate.

When taking on new volunteer projects for the unit, involve as many of the unit spouses as possible in the planning stage. This will encourage their participation. If there was enthusiasm at the last unit coffee for a children's Christmas party, there will probably be plenty of willing workers to make the party a success. If there are no volunteers for a project, the interest level must be too low for success, so you may want to postpone the project until a later time.

At times, you may be contacted to approach the unit spouses for volunteer positions. Protect the members of the unit whenever possible from unnecessary commitments. For example, a blood drive may be planned for the Christmas season. If you know the members of the unit are heavily committed during this time, you may be in a position to suggest the blood drive be delayed until more volunteers would be available.

Sometimes you may be asked for the names of volunteers as OWC candidates and other volunteer positions. Contact the person being considered to fully inform them of the requirements of the position. Also, learn whether the individual would be interested in this type of responsibility or not. Don't push someone into a situation that is more than they are prepared to handle at the time. When considering a young spouse for an OWC board position, for example, examine the candidate's level of experience. Don't encourage running for OWC president if the individual has never previously occupied a position. By suggesting a position with lesser responsibilities, you can help make the volunteer experience for a young spouse more rewarding.

When you are soliciting volunteers, the best example is yourself. Be the willing worker on as many unit projects as possible, your own enthusiasm can be contagious too! Many will want to share the zeal and inspiration of a caring and involved commander's spouse.

One last tip for rounding up volunteers is to keep the jobs as simple as possible. Don't make work! Everyone has enough work of his/her own to accomplish. Be receptive to ideas that can make decorating for a party easy, instead of involving days of preparation. Consider functions where everyone can "bring his/her own."

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Look for ways that the group can get together to enjoy friendship and camaraderie without it having to be an extravaganza!

Credentialling

Credentialling is being recognized as a valuable tool to increase volunteerism. Credentialling means that the volunteer has something substantial to build upon for future work or volunteer experience and, in some cases, greater personal satisfaction. Credentialling involves documentation of the skills and responsibilities involved in the performance of a volunteer job.

The credential should include a complete job description, skills involved, responsibility level, training, any awards received, and the time involved. A volunteer can put together the job description and have it signed by a person in authority, such as the chairperson of the program or the base commander. This document can be included in résumés for a transition into the job market or may be kept in a scrapbook. In either case, the volunteer has tangible evidence of the skills and responsibilities acquired in service to the community.

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PROGRAM AND ACTIVITY PLANNING

Scheduling events can be difficult at times. Here are a few considerations that may help you with planning and participation.

Planning

Consider the appeal of the planned function. Involve as many members as possible in suggesting ideas and planning. The resulting functions will have more appeal if many group members are involved. Be responsive and enthusiastic once the group has decided upon a course, even if horseback-riding is not "your thing." You can always hold the reins! Don't try to force "black tie and tails" or "country and western" for every event just because that is your personal preference. You have to become an enthusiastic *part* of the group before you can *lead* the group.

Scheduling

Consider if the planned event is timely. Check the command, base, and unit calendars for possible conflicts. There is no point scheduling a large party if half of the potential attendees will be attending another function or will be away on TDY. In addition, the attendance may not be satisfactory if a unit formal is planned for Saturday, and everyone in the unit attends a command sponsored formal on Friday. Scheduling is important for large and small events, not only for attendance, but for volunteers and for general interest.

Strive for variety in the planned functions in order to increase their appeal. Some events can be formal, some may be with the family, and some may include the entire unit. Functions can be for officers only or they may be special interest trips for the unit. Consider the weather too—picnics are not always a success in December.

Your event should be well-organized whether it is large or small. Planning should begin well in advance with as many group members involved as possible. This makes less work for all, including you. Planning meetings should be well-organized, so that everyone's time is well used. The meetings should be kept to a minimum to get the job done. Consider time, location, theme, escorts, nametags, invitations, reservations, finance, menu, program, publicity, clean-up, and an after-action report when making your plans. Any or all of these may apply.

Publicity

Publicity can influence the success of an event. In order to be effective, publicity should be disseminated well in advance of the scheduled function and it should reach as many people as possible. Unit newsletters, flyers, the calling list, bulletin boards, and announcements at unit functions are possible means for disseminating publicity.

Location

When deciding on the location for a function, keep several things in mind. Is it centrally located—if a unit party is planned for a restaurant on one side of town, it may discourage those who live far away from attending. If unit members live in

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different parts of the city, functions may alternate from one locale to the other. Be sure that the facility meets all the needs for the scheduled function. For example, will you need a dance floor or a stage? Reserve the facility as early as possible to avoid disappointments. You should also consider the atmosphere of the facility; does it achieve the warmth or feeling you hope to attain with the scheduled function?

Types of Events

There are several types of events that may be scheduled during the year. Some are more formal, such as a change of command ceremony or a dining-out. Others are less formal and for the family, such as picnics or a Halloween Haunted House. Fundraisers will probably be necessary, special interest trips, parties for officers and their spouses, and events for the entire unit can be held.

The more mandatory (everyone hates the word!) functions are times for military protocol and courtesy; they can be enjoyable as well as learning experiences. Change of command ceremonies are very special, and it is difficult not to become caught up in the emotion of the event. A dining-out is not only an opportunity to "dress up," but it can also build morale and bring the unit closer as all members share in some of the richer traditions of the military.

Retirement Ceremonies

Retirement ceremonies are also special. They give us the opportunity to honor friends and co-workers as they make the transition from military to civilian life. This is a very emotional time for the retiree and family. The tribute paid by the unit can provide memories and strength in the days ahead.

Family Events

Family events for the unit can have a very unifying effect. They can be great morale-builders. Picnics and Christmas parties and tours of an airplane may have a very positive effect on the whole family.

Fundraisers

Fundraisers are a fact of life. They provide the funds needed in a unit. These events can be of many types. They are most successful when they are firmly supported by unit members; therefore, it is wise to get suggestions from members for their choice of fundraising activities. Not everyone likes to bake for a bake sale—some people are not even wild about washing cars! There is a way to make money and have fun that is well suited for the unit and for you...really!

Determine the goals of the unit when planning fundraisers. Does the unit contribute heavily to a charity? Does the unit send flowers to each family member in the hospital? Does the unit provide farewell gifts for departing members and their spouses? Once you determine approximately what the unit expenses will be, you can plan appropriate fundraisers. There is no point in planning a huge ball to raise $5,000 if the unit needs only $500 for the year.

Most unit spouses' groups limit themselves to $100 on hand at any one time. No

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one seems to know where this magic figure came from, but it does exist. Whatever the specific need and goals of the unit, keep the treasury healthy in order to meet unforeseen expenses. Be prepared. Commanders have been known to transfer rather suddenly and handling over a healthy treasury to the succeeding commander's spouse is desirable.

Some fundraisers that have been successful for unit spouses' groups include the following: chili suppers, Chinese auctions, raffles, bake sale booths at the OWC bazaar, and plant sales. The group may decide that their time and energies are more valuable than their money, so they may even elect to make donations. Many units strive to keep their expenses down; they avoid expensive mementos and gifts and send cards instead of flowers. The goals and limits for the unit spouses' group can be discussed and decided upon by the members themselves.

Special Interest Functions

Special interest functions may enliven the unit. Buses chartered for baseball games, shopping sprees, plays and ballets, or tours of nearby points of interest can be organized. The key here is demand...interest...action! Any of these activities takes planning and participation, in other words, volunteers. You can't singlehandedly take on the responsibility of entertaining the unit. Be an enthusiastic supporter and willing worker, but strive for group action to accomplish as much as possible.

At times, the unit may have a party for officers and their spouses only. These events should be publicized through a closed network, such as the spouses' calling list, flyers in the officers' V-files, or bulletin boards in an officers' area. When parties are scheduled for both officers and NCOs, consider location and cost. These parties may not be scheduled at the Officers' Club. Use the criteria cited previously for selecting location and try to keep costs at a reasonable level.

You may get questions such as, "When is the next party?" or "When can we have a children's party?" You cannot set up everything or accomplish everything by yourself, so when such questions come along, offer immediate support and then delegate. If there are no willing volunteers, then there will be no parties. You can encourage simple party ideas and planning to make participation more attractive—pot lucks can be just as much fun as formal dinners. Your own enthusiasm and participation will often set the tone for the group.

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SOCIAL EVENTS AND OBLIGATIONS

In partnership with your spouse, your involvement with the unit will probably be extensive. Programs and parties will be planned throughout the year and your support or direct involvement will be desirable. Many commander's spouses "do their own thing" in this regard. They may work on all the projects for the year or plan special parties that suit their individual interests, such as a costume party at Halloween for the unit, a hayride in the fall, or a western dance evening with lessons.

Entertaining at Home

Even when you decide to entertain the unit at home, many others are always willing to help. The plans do not need to be elaborate, pot luck suppers, B.Y.O.B. parties, and even "bring your own picnic" parties can be fun. At times let others in the unit share the responsibilities of planning and organizing in order to save some of your energy for other projects.

Invitations Out

You may be invited to a number of weddings, showers, and other events throughout the year depending upon the makeup of the unit. Even though your schedule is probably very full, it will mean a lot to unit members to have you attend such functions if at all possible. Gifts at such occasions do not have to be expensive or elaborate. You may be able to come up with some great craft idea or locate a store with something that particularly appeals to you at a reasonable cost. You may even purchase several gifts to keep on hand and save time at a later date.

Retirements will probably take place while your spouse is commander. Sometimes the person retiring wants little or no fanfare, but at other times the unit will schedule a retirement dinner. Retirements are very special occasions; this is the culmination of many years of service and dedication by the Air Force member and family members. Even if the retiring member has only been with the unit for a short while, every courtesy and consideration should be rendered for the retirement.

The retirement may be a time of painful and nostalgic transition for the military family. Military friends and fellow unit members can help to make this transition memorable and uplifting by making the affair as special as possible. The commander and others may make special presentations to the retiring member. The commander's spouse may make a presentation to the spouse of the retiring member. A little research concerning the family, and the spouse in particular, may be helpful in this circumstance. Everyone will be there to honor the retiree and his/her family, and your words of appreciation and tribute will be warmly received.

Unit members may invite you and your spouse to parties at their homes. Even if your schedule is very crowded, the hosts will usually appreciate your attendance. You may not be able to stay too long, but may attend long enough to visit with other partygoers and be supportive to your hosts. When you are responsible for a party, the attendance can indicate success or failure to you. The same is often true for others.

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Unit Functions

The unit may schedule orientations during the year to acquaint family members with the mission and structue of the unit. You may not be able to attend all of these orientations, but often you can answer questions from family members even better than unit members themselves. When questions arise about separations and coping, you may be more able to offer reassurances because you have "been there."

Some units have sports teams, which compete in base leagues. These games can be fun for families as well as unit members. Many times you can get to know enlisted and NCO spouses as well as officers' spouses in the bleachers. The "after-the-game" celebrations can be a lot of fun too. At a farewell party one commander's spouse was approached by a number of enlisted personnel who said they had always noted her presence at their sporting events and had appreciated her interest and participation.

NCO graduations and other awards ceremonies are also occasions to meet unit members and their families on a one-to-one basis. It is a special time for the family, and the presence of the commander and spouse will be very much appreciated. Often the unit can provide a short summary concerning the unit member and family that will be helpful for conversational purposes.

Some unit spouse' groups elect to decorate the unit for holidays. This is, of course, optional but it can be a lot of fun. The decorating itself can become a party with refreshments and other activities. Working together for others has a tendency to bring the group together. Sometimes older children like to get into the act too. Decorating "Mom or Dad's" office can be fun! One unit put up a Christmas tree with wrapped treats underneath for any "small" visitors during the holidays.

Volunteer projects may come along that require your assistance as a volunteer or as an intermediary to recruit volunteers. You, obviously, cannot be superhuman and help with every project. Choose the projects with particular interest to you. Sometimes you may decide not to volunteer in a certain area until you are free from the responsibilities of being a commander's spouse.

You may need to fit a few hospital visits into your schedule during the year. These may be for a new mother in the unit or someone very ill. Visits do not have to be lengthy and often can be worked in with other errands. These visits are usually very much appreciated by unit members and their families.

During crises and emergencies your assistance may be especially needed. Again, you cannot do everything yourself, but you can mobilize emergency committees or initiate other activities. Often, just your "shoulder to cry on" is required. In some cases, you may babysit or prepare meals yourself. This will depend upon the circumstances and your own commitments. Entire units have helped dig homes out of mudslides and sprayed water on homes to protect them from brush fires. They really demonstrate the meaning of the Air Force family!

Command and Base Functions

In conjunction with your spouse's command, you will be included in a number of functions for the larger command. These will include change of command cere-

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monies and functions for visiting VIPs. A number of command parties, lunches, and meetings will also have you on the guest/invitation list. Your support and attendance at these functions is appreciated in the same way that support and attendance of command spouses is appreciated at unit functions. The command will also have projects during the year. Time may not allow you to participate in all of these, but you may be able to offer support by "getting the work out." Sometimes you may be able to serve as a volunteer also. One convenient way to help the command spouses' group is to act as a caller. This will keep you aware of their activities and allow you to help in a way that can fit conveniently into your schedule.

You will receive invitations to a number of base functions also. Again, your attendance and support will be appreciated. These functions give you the opportunity to become better acquainted with people from other commands on base. You may be working with people from the chaplain's office, the legal office, or the medical facility in conjunction with problems concerning the unit. The personal rapport you have established at various functions can be very helpful to you.

The base newspaper can help to keep you informed on base-wide activities. You may want to participate in some of these, as time allows, and also to help the communications network by getting the word out to unit families. You may want to mention teen dances, blood drives, tours, and military family benefits orientations, which could be beneficial and of interest to unit families.

As a commander's spouse you will be a representative to the surrounding community. You may be invited to a number of community events such as military balls and community fundraisers. Often you will meet community leaders and observe the functioning of other groups. You may observe, firsthand, an enthusiasm for growth and change, and gain a sense of what can be accomplished when many work for a common goal.

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TIME MANAGEMENT AND PERSONAL ORGANIZATION

If you have never been organized before, now is the time to make the attempt—as the commander's spouse. An up-to-date notebook, organization, and planning ahead can save you time, energy, and avoid unnecessary pressures. Your notebook and calendar will be in constant use, so you may want to find a handy spot for them near the telephone.

Your Notebook

You will probably receive a notebook from the previous commander's spouse. At first, the jumble of papers will seem strange and impossible to wade through; but as you review them, a picture will start to emerge. Organize your notebook in a format and with materials that are comfortable and meaningful for you. Several former commanders' spouses found the following list of information useful to include in their notebooks:

-rosters (OWC, NCO, command, unit, etc.)
-calendar of unit coffees
-calendar of unit hosts
-calendar of unit programs
-list of hospitals/phone numbers/visiting hours
-party/program ideas/contacts
-resources
-list of unit decorations
-list of unit supplies
-telephone callers diagram
-committee chairpersons/job descriptions
-after-action reports
-OWC minutes/flyers
-OWC job descriptions/constitution/by-laws

Rosters (OWC, NCO, Command, Unit)

Rosters from all of the organizations with which you are associated will be useful to you. Remember to include rosters from volunteer organizations that you work with or advise. It is a constant battle to keep rosters current. You may be able to arrange with your spouse, the executive officer, or secretary to help keep you up-to-date on unit personnel.

Schedules of Unit Coffees, Hosts, and Programs

Schedules for unit coffees, hosts, and programs will be very important to you. Besides helping you to be in the right place at the right time, you will possibly use this information in unit newsletters and for publicity.

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List of Hospitals

A listing of local and base hospitals with phone numbers and visiting hours may be handy to include in your notebook. With luck, you will never have to refer to this list; but if your unit is large, there is a strong possibility that new babies or illnesses may cause you to fit a hospital visit into your schedule. If you live in a large metropolitan area, even small maps to the hospitals or hints on parking may be useful.

Party and Program Ideas

A notebook section on party and program ideas can give you a starting point when there seems to be a lull in enthusiasm or interest. Members of the unit should be polled occasionally for ideas. Maybe the "trip to the garment district" hidden in the pages of your notebook will be just the event to bolster spirits in March after a long winter.

Resources and Contacts

A notebook section for resources and contacts can save you and your successors from "reinventing the wheel." Maybe the previous commander's spouse found a great place for copying materials at half the cost or located a terrific florist who made all unit centerpieces and corsages for cost. These resources and contacts can be "worth their weight in gold." Be sure to note any valuable contacts that you make for your successor's future use.

Unit Supplies and Decorations

Lists of unit supplies and decorating supplies are of obvious value. For example, there is no need to purchase a Christmas tree if there are three trees in storage. Often, party supplies are kept for future use, but it is difficult to remember how many plates and cups were left over from the last paty or a function the previous year. A supply list can solve this problem.

Telephone Callers Diagram

The telephone "tree" for the unit and a complete list of callers can be very handy for the commander's spouse also. The list of callers can also be useful to you if there is an evident breakdown in the lines of communication. You will be able to quickly spot a caller who does not take the position seriously and act to correct the situation.

Committee Chairpersons

You will be referring to the list of committee chairpersons regularly. These are the individuals who will work with you constantly to make the unit spouses' group function smoothly. You may want to keep a list of job descriptions for the committee chairperson also. If a chairperson transfers suddenly and you need to explain the duties of the position to another, it is helpful to have the job description in front of you. You might want to have OWC job descriptions on hand for the same purposes.

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OWC Minutes and Flyers

OWC minutes and flyers are handy to have for reference. It is difficult to retain information concerning OWC events and base activities in your head—the printed word can be very reassuring. Many unit spouses may assume that you know what's happening "everywhere" on base. You will probably want to help them or answer their questions whenever possible, so your flyers and notebook will be very convenient.

After-action Reports

After-action reports can be especially helpful. If your unit had an Easter party for the children, for example, a report listing the number of attendees, refreshments served, location, prizes, number of eggs required, and other details will be very helpful to the committee planning next year's function. Tips describing what worked and what didn't work, as well as suggestions for improvements, can be treasures when the next group puts the event together.

Where Is It?

Your mailbox will often hold an invitation for you. It is easy to misplace these invitations unless you have a place set aside for them. Some commanders' spouses like to post invitations on a bulletin board; others keep invitations in a basket or folder. The idea is to have them readily available for reference regarding time, dress, and other information. Often you will want to take the invitation with you, especially if it includes directions to a new location.

As commander's spouse, you may have inherited a number of supplies for the unit, including unit scrapbooks, nametags, party supplies, welcoming gifts, unit pins, newcomer packets, or a wide variety of items. If you can find a central location, a cabinet, drawer, or closet for these items, it may save last minute searches with the whole family pitching in.

The Super Organizer

Some military spouses get *very* organized. If you decide to be a "super organizer," you may want to keep files on menus and plans for various functions, such as dinners, lunches, teas, brunches, and parties. You may even want to record the names of guests and the menu that was served for dinner so that you won't repeat that menu for the same guests. Some organizers have notebooks on decorating ideas from functions they have attended through the years. They seem to be able to pull brilliant ideas out of the hat, but it's really out of the notebook they have been keeping!

You may want to use some or all of these ideas for record keeping and organization. "Whatever works for you is the best method!" The ideas listed here are suggestions that have worked for other commanders' spouses in some circumstances.

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EMPLOYMENT

To Work or Not to Work

Today many of our military spouses work. You may already have a job when your spouse assumes command or you may be working long hours as a volunteer. You may also be considering getting a job to ease the extra financial responsibilities that arise from the new command position.

There will be added expenses for clothes, dinners and other functions, wedding and baby gifts, for example, as the commander's spouse. This is literally an investment in your spouse's career. Your spouse's advancement and success should benefit the entire family, so there will eventually be a monetary as well as a personal return on this investment.

When considering a job for yourself or a large volunteer commitment, realistically examine your schedule for the period of time you will be involved in this command partnership. There are always unscheduled events that you may be asked to attend, such as change of command ceremonies and events for visiting VIP's. Hospital visits and emergency situations are also impossible to predict. This means that you will need a great deal of flexibility in your schedule.

Finding a career that is compatible with an Air Force career is very difficult. There are few of these careers that exist, but there are fewer still that are compatible with the role of commander's spouse. You are undoubtedly capable of managing a career, your family, and your role as commander's spouse, but consider carefully whether these can be successfully accomplished simultaneously.

The key criteria in this consideration is flexibility. Any part-time or full-time commitment which you might accept should allow you a great deal of flexibility so that you can meet the responsibilities as commander's spouse also. You will be a role model for many junior spouses, and you will have a great effect upon the morale of the families of the unit. The value of your role as friend, supporter, and role model cannot be overstated. In weighing all of these considerations, you must find a balance that will work for you and your family.

Be aware that the attitudes of senior staff and their spouses concerning employment for a commander's spouse may be pertinent to your spouse acquiring a command position or retaining that position. This is a point for consideration, but your decision will depend upon the individual senior staff and upon your own attitudes, goals, and capabilities.

You may feel that you will be able to handle most of the responsibilities as commander's spouse and still be employed if the spouse of the second in command can fill in the gaps. This may be an alternative, but again it depends upon the attitude of the spouse of the second in command and also your own capability to lead and inspire under these circumstances.

Many times hard feelings arise when the spouse of the second in command is asked to fill in for the commander's spouse on a regular basis. One of the reasons for this is that often the commander and spouse are invited to a number of special social events. The second in command and spouse may not be invited to all of the

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same events. In this case, the spouse of the second in command expends a great deal of effort without reaping as many of the rewards as the commander's spouse. The spouse of the second in command may also be concerned about burnout in anticipation of being a commander's spouse soon. Keep all of these things in mind when making decisions about outside commitments during your sojourn as commander's spouse.

Unit Spouses' Employment

Junior spouses may come to you for advice concerning employment. They may want or need to be employed for a number of reasons but may feel this could hurt their spouse's career or lead to ostracism. Your reassurance that the Air Force supports its people in all of their endeavors can be very helpful. Stress that there are always ways to participate in the unit even with commitments such as school or a job. The support network available through involvement with other unit spouses and families is invaluable to us all. Be sure that the young spouse realizes this source of strength and reassurance is available and that he/she also has much to offer to the group. Programs and functions can be planned to accommodate the needs and interests of working and non-working spouses.

Working spouses can be major contributors to the unit. They can act as callers, welcomers, publicity chairpersons, treasurers, sunshine chairpersons, or serve in a number of other capacities. These spouses can contribute baked goods or plants in support of fundraisers and help with parties scheduled for evenings or at times when they are available. Try to encourage their participation in as many areas of the unit functions as possible. Working spouses need the support network as much as the other spouses. Unit parties will be more enjoyable if the working spouses are acquainted with the other unit spouses. When the service member is away the spouses may find comfort in the companinship and friendship of other unit families and may be more confident of the support of the unit in times of emergency.

Your own influence will be far greater than you may realize. Your dedication to the Air Force mission and Air Force families can create a surge of morale and a lasting effect upon the lives of the unit families. Your enthusiasm and participation can be contagious and may cause many working spouses and those in school to become members of the unit.

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HINTS AND IDEAS

There is no magic formula for the days ahead of you as the commander's spouse. Your own personality, concern, and positive attitude will be your best tools. Whatever research you can manage will be very helpful too. By staying aware of current events through such means as *Air Force Times*, *Air Force Magazine*, and *Ladycom Magazine* you can better understand the Air Force mission and on-going programs affecting military families. This insight into the bigger picture can make the position of commander's spouse more interesting and enjoyable. It will also help you to inform the unit spouses and to answer their questions and concerns.

Staying current on issues closer at hand will also be helpful. The base newspaper, the daily bulletin, the OWC magazine, and the communications network among military spouses will help you to know what is happening around you and what is affecting families in the unit. Your efforts to stay current can give you an added air of assurance and concern, which can benefit those around you.

Leave Time for Yourself

Remember to be your own "best friend" and leave time for yourself and your own interests. All the effort it takes to be organized—coordinating schedules, spacing events, planning well in advance—will be worth the reward of self-satisfaction and time left over for *you*! Your family will probably appreciate having you around too.

Some former commanders' spouses have identified a few hints that can help the flow of your days. Many suggest getting "call-waiting" for your telephone. If you have never had this service before, you will enjoy it as commander's spouse. Your phone will probably ring often, and much of the business you will have to conduct for the unit can be accomplished on the phone. A service member who is trying to reach you to say that an unscheduled exercise will keep the unit at the base until midnight can become very frustrated when the phone is busy for three hours! Your children can be equally frustrated when they try to call home or to call out. Some families even get two different telephone numbers.

A microwave oven may already be in your kitchen or maybe you have been thinking about taking the plunge. Now is the time! A microwave oven can save the day by thawing meat at the last minute for unexpected guests, a quick meal, or leftovers. Your children may *almost* find the microwave a terrific replacement for you.

Shopping ahead for everything can be a great help. This includes your wardrobe, the children's new school clothes, and Christmas and birthday presents. When you run across a great buy on something suitable for a wedding or baby gift, you may want to buy several of each for future events. It's an added lift to have one less thing to fit into a busy schedule.

Instead of wading through the military alphabet soup, some commander's spouses put together an acronym notebook for themselves. They don't try to in-

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clude every acronym in the Air Force in this notebook—they don't want to start a library! They include only acronyms that they hear often in conversations or read in articles concerning the current base, unit, or command.

A Fringe Benefit: Self-awareness

A sense of humor may get you through some otherwise trying times. There are times when everything won't go right, whether it's the family, a unit party, or your car that won't start. Amend these disasters where possible, then accept what you can't change and look for the humor in the situation. Your continued distress won't make you or those aound you feel any better, so look for the positive side—it's usually in the far right corner of the next room. The people and systems with whom you will be associaed can be a real source of education. Your interaction with others through your new role can even lead to a better understanding of yourself. Your new role is an opportunity for service and room for personal development.

As commander's spouse you will be a valuable asset, not only to your spouse, but also to the Air Force and its mission. Your influence and example can positively affect morale for the unit and its families. Morale can be a deciding factor in the retention of many military members. Your role is of inestimable value. The Air Force realizes the importance and value of "two for one." You and your spouse have been selected as a team to support and nurture a unit composed of systems and people of prime importance to the Air Force and to national security. There is no giant thank-you note awaiting you at the end of the tour, but your rewards will be many!

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

OFFICIAL

CHARLES A. GABRIEL, General, USAF
Chief of Staff

JAMES H. DELANEY, Colonel, USAF
Director of Administration

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APPENDIX A

Example of a formal invitation: (handwritten, printed, or engraved)

The Officers and Ladies
of the
Twelfth Military Airlift Squadron
request the pleasure of your company
at a farewell dinner
honoring
Colonel and Mrs. John T. Smith
on Saturday, the second of March
at seven o'clock
Bolling Air Force Base Officers' Club

R.S.V.P.
638-2827

Military - Blue Service
Civilian - Business Suit

Example of an informal invitation:

Please come to lunch, Friday, May 15th at 11:30 A.M. Bring your favorite cookie recipe.

Sincerely,
Joan White

R.S.V.P.
563-0089

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APPENDIX B

UNIT SIGN-UP SHEET

The following committee positions are available for *(time limit)*, please sign your name and phone number if you are interested in filling any of these positions.

Telephone: The telephone chairperson maintains a current list of all the spouses of the unit and constructs a telephone "tree" so that each spouse will be called concerning unit activities. The chairperson obtains callers who will phone 5-6 members in their area each month. The chairperson gives a copy of the calling diagram to the commander's spouse and notifies of any changes.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Sunshine: The sunshine chairperson sends cards for new babies, congratulations, weddings, and other events in the name of the unit spouses' group. The chairperson should purchase these cards and receive reimbursement from the treasurer.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Programs: The program chairperson arranges programs for the regularly scheduled unit spouses meetings. The chairperson notifies the publicity chairperson of these programs and gives the details to the commander's spouse also. The commander's spouse will also need the name and address of any speaker in order to send appropriate thank you notes. The program chairperson should plan several programs in advance and announce the schedule of program to the group for suggestions and comments.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Treasurer: The treasurer retains funds collected by the unit spouses' group. The treasurer reports to the group regarding income, expenses, and the amount on hand at regularly scheduled meetings. The treasurer reimburses members of the unit for unit expenses and records these.

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Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Invitations: The invitations chairperson sends invitations on unit stationery to Senior spouses and other guests of the unit spouses' group. These invitations should be received two weeks prior to the event with time, date, location, and dress noted. A map may be enclosed if needed. The invitations chairperson also purchases unit stationery when supplies are low and is reimbursed for the costs.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Publicity: The publicity chairperson writes a column for the OWC magazine and includes recent and upcoming events concerning the unit spouses' group.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Roster: The roster chairperson obtains a current listing of unit officers' spouses and types a listing of these names, addresses, and telephone numbers. The rosters should be copied and assembled for distribution at the first fall meeting. Update sheets may be required at intervals during the year.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Member-at-Large The member-at-large represents the unit spouses at a regularly scheduled meeting with commissary and BX representatives. These meetings are usually quarterly. The member reports events of the meeting to the unit spouses and voices their input at the board meetings.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

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Welcoming: The welcoming chairperson established a committee to greet newcomers and assemble packets of information for the newcomers. The chairperson or one of the committee members visits each newcomer and arranges transportation to the next scheduled unit spouses' gathering.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Coffee: The coffee chairperson passes a sign-up sheet to obtain hosts and helpers for upcoming coffees well in advance. The chairperson reminds the hosts a month in advance that their turn is approaching and reminds them that nametags will be required.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

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